

Nevada State Climate Office

Quarterly Report and Outlook

April - June 2019

A Quick Note!

Renovations to the Quarterly Report are on-going. They're taking longer than expected, like, well, basically all renovations that have ever been done.

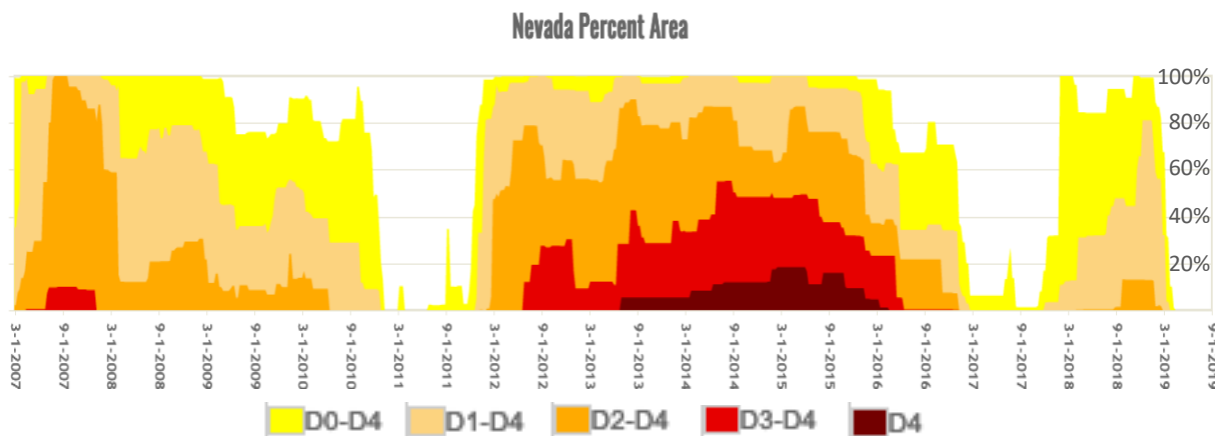


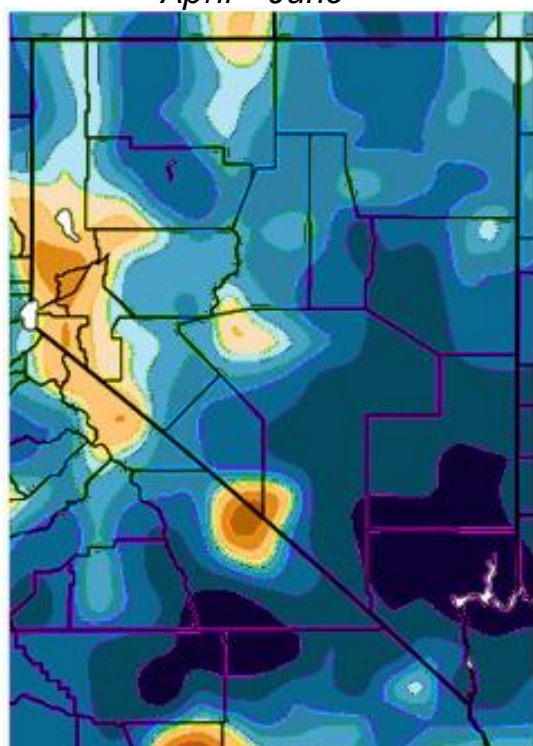
Figure 1. Timeline showing the percent of Nevada that is abnormally dry or in drought between March 2007 and today. Figure source: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Data/Timeseries.aspx>

Notable Weather and Climate in Nevada

The big news here is that Nevada has no drought or abnormally dry conditions! In mid-April, the drought monitor removed all drought and abnormally dry categories from the Nevada map. This is the first time that Nevada has been entirely free from drought since June 2011. Even after the big winter of 2016/2017, small parts of the state remained abnormally dry (D0). Although northwest Nevada was drought free for much of 2017, abnormally dry conditions did persist in south central Nevada through 2017. Historically, entirely drought-free periods across the entire state have been short-lived. Maybe we'll be lucky this time, but I would suggest enjoying it while you can.

Following a wet winter, much of the state was wet through the spring, as well. Much of the southern part of the state had 200 – 300% of normal April - June precipitation. Around Eureka, that meant 2-3" more precipitation than usual, most of that during two very wet weeks in late May. Spring temperatures were also relatively cool, with average temperatures dipping more than 2°F below normal in and around Austin. May was particularly cool and wet across the state. Across the entire spring season, there were some areas of below normal precipitation in and around Reno, Death Valley and northwest Nye county. Many of those areas did have slightly above normal temperatures, as well, particularly during April and June. As a result of the generally cool, wet spring, snowpack was above normal in all of the basins that provide water to Nevada into June. The Natural Resource Conservation Service doesn't provide much information on percent of normal snowpack into late June—in places there isn't usually enough snow to do so. But, from Reno you can still see snow in the Sierra, and there was snow on Mt. Charleston near Las Vegas for Memorial Day weekend!

Percent of Normal Precipitation April – June



Departure from Normal Temperature April – June

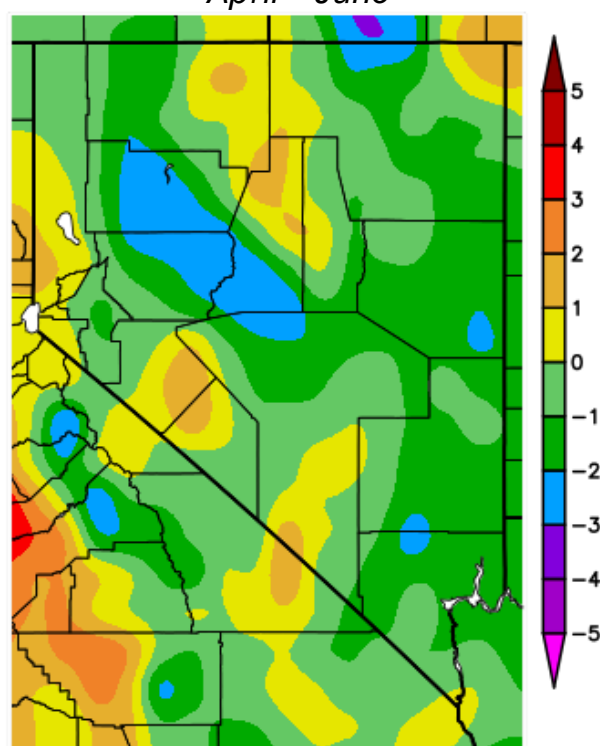


Figure 2. Percent of normal precipitation (left) and departure from normal temperature (°F, right) for April - June 2019. Figure source: <https://hprcc.unl.edu/maps.php?map=ACISClimateMaps>

Outlook for July – September

The Climate Prediction Center outlook indicates a slight chance that eastern Nevada could have a wet summer. The rest of Nevada has equal chances of seeing a wet, dry, or normal summer. The temperature outlook is more definitive. The CPC indicates that, statewide, there is a 50-60% chance of above normal temperatures. Whether summer is warmer than usual or not, in Nevada, summer is fire season. That makes now a great time to review information about wildland fire at Living with Fire, <https://www.livingwithfire.info/>.

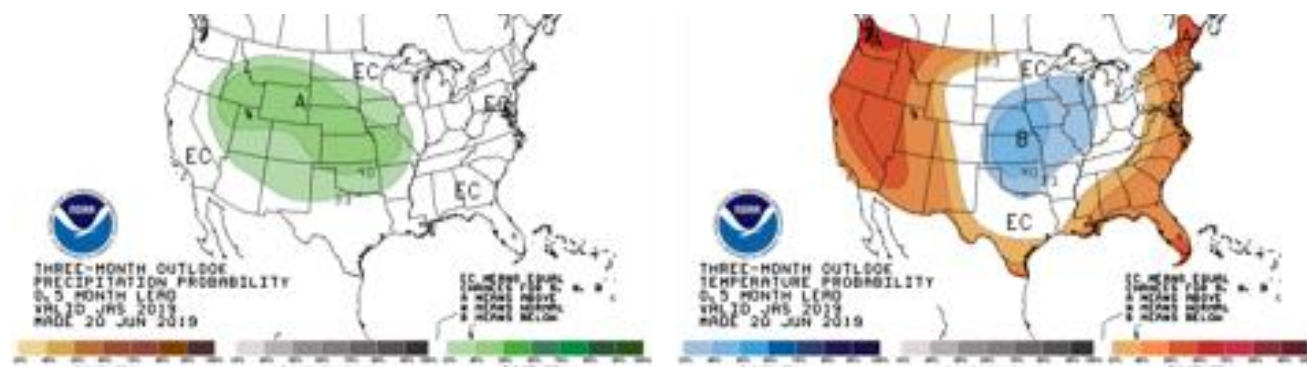


Figure 3. July - September precipitation (left) and temperature (right) outlooks from the Climate Prediction Center. Image source: https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=1

In depth – just how hot does it get in Nevada?

Nevada's record high temperature is 125°F¹. You may have experienced it, if you had the misfortune to be in Laughlin on June 29, 1994. I have nothing against Laughlin, but 125° is really unpleasant. Thankfully, 125°F is rare, but summers are still hot, especially in southern Nevada. In the summer, (July – September), daytime highs are over 90° nearly every day (69 – 92 days out of the 92-day season) at McCarran Airport in Las Vegas and over 100° about half of the time. In fact, the lowest July daytime high temperature in Las Vegas (since 1949) was 81°F, and the city's the lowest July nighttime temperature has been 60°F.

If that's not your cup of tea, since 1949 Reno has never had more than 14 days over 100°F between July and September (and that's at the airport, which is in a warm part of the city), and Elko has never had more than eight days where the mercury topped the century mark. It is more common for daytime highs to exceed 90°F. Since 1949, the temperature in Elko has exceeded 90°F on at least 2 days every summer, and Reno temperatures have topped 90° at the airport at least 18 days every summer. But since 1949, Elko has not seen more than 60 days over 90°F in any particular summer. There were 60 days over 90° in 1967 and 59 similarly hot days in 2017. And old record suggests that there might have been 62 days over 90°F in Elko back in 1917. Reno has not had more than 65 days over 90°F over the course of a summer. There were 65 days over 90° in 2018 and 64 days with high temperatures over 90° in 2017.

It's also possible for nighttime lows to drop near or below freezing in both Elko and Reno during the summer – one of the many challenges of high desert gardening. On July 11, 1974, nighttime lows dropped to 33°F in Reno – the coldest July temperature at the airport there, and temperatures in August and September can drop even lower. In Elko, nights with temperatures below freezing are even more common. Between 1949 and 2018, Elko had had only eight summers when the temperature did not fall below freezing, and 15 summers when the temperature was below freezing on 10 or more nights.

Get in touch!

It's always great to hear from you! If you have questions, comments or concerns, you can always reach out to the State Climate Office at climate@unr.edu or smcafee@unr.edu or call 775-784-6999.

¹ <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/extremes/scec/records>